



(written) Testimony
Appropriations Committee
Barbara A. Shaw
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Thank you Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the committee for this opportunity to share some thoughts with you regarding the urgent need for AIDS Housing Bond Funds. My name is Barbara Shaw and I'm the Acting CEO of Hands On Hartford and Director of the agency's Peter's Retreat supported housing program for formerly homeless individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

The 27 individuals we house and support every night greatly appreciate the Governor's proposal for increased dollars for bond funds. The beautiful but aging building these formerly homeless, medically compromised men and women call home is one of a growing number of AIDS housing programs that are in increasing states of disrepair and in need of a variety of health, safety and energy efficiency improvements. Since 1990, the State of CT has invested approximately 9 million dollars worth of bond funds into these programs ----- but, unfortunately, not in recent years as the funds were wiped out in the last administration's recissions.

As you probably know, housing is an evidence-based HIV prevention and care strategy. Extensive research has documented that over and over again. Simply put, people who are stably housed are more likely to be in -- and stay in care --- and are less likely to engage in high risk behaviors; all of which means far fewer expensive trips to the emergency room or other institutions resulting in an overall cost savings.

At Peter's Retreat we work diligently to ensure that our state's citizens living with HIV/AIDS have safe and affordable housing, access to vital physical and behavioral health care and a variety of supportive services so that they might live their lives in optimum and dignity. We are proud of the commitment that our agency, community and the State have made over the past nearly 20 years to our 22,000 square foot building serving over 300 vulnerable men and women during these years. We find

ourselves, however, in critical need of an infusion of resources to ensure that this building remains safe and sound. The roof is deteriorating and beginning to leak, the heating system is well over a half century old and showing signs of malfunction, and our driveway is becoming unsafe, especially for those using wheelchairs. And this is a list of just the most urgent needs related to the health of the building that many call home.

We urge the Appropriations Committee to reinvest in these life saving programs, providing 200 slots of supported housing to over 400 men, women and children each year, by adding \$1.5 million to the AIDS housing bond funds in the DSS budget.

Thank you, on behalf of the residents of Peter's Retreat and our other neighbors living with HIV/AIDs, who are among the most medically and socially fragile and vulnerable people in this state.